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APOLLONIUS OF TYANA



# APOLLONIUS OF TYANA

A STUDY OF HIS LIFE AND TIMES

BY

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WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

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## PREFACE

NINE and ninety years have passed since Edward Berwick, vicar of Leixlip in County Kildare, published the first and only complete English version of the *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* by Flavius Philostratus, the rhetorician and sophist of Lemnos. Berwick's volume has become so rare that, last autumn, two London book-dealers of world-wide reputation searched and advertised for a copy in vain. Yet the nineteenth century produced a plentiful crop of essays and commentaries on the gospel of Apollonius according to Philostratus. Baur, Zeller, Cardinal Newman, J. A. Froude, Chassang—these are well-known names, but they do not exhaust the list of scholars and critics who, since Berwick's days, have responded to the allurements of

Tyana's saint and sage. Nor has the spell fallen upon scholars and critics alone. Thousands of readers of Keats' *Lamia* have lingered curiously over the foot-note, drawn from *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, in which Burton quotes Philostratus' account of the young philosopher whom Apollonius miraculously delivered from a lamia, or serpent, in the guise of a beautiful young gentlewoman. There are others who profess to breathe again the atmosphere of the Æsculapian College at Ægæe in Pater's *Marius the Epicurean*. Swedenborgians have found in Apollonius a Swedenborg born out of due time: and some so-called Theosophists, on the strength of the sage's pilgrimage to the wise men of India, have claimed him for their very own. Yet his full legend in English is no longer to be bought for money.

There was, however, a day when the names of Philostratus and of Apollonius of Tyana were on every lettered Briton's tongue. Towards the end of the seventeenth century there appeared in London a

translation, by Charles Blount, of the first two books of Philostratus' *Life*. Blount's notes (which, according to some, he borrowed from a more eminent scholar) poured oil upon the already fierce fires of the Deistical controversy. Bossuet had described Apollonius as a magician in league with the devil; but the effect of Blount's artfully annotated pages was to pit Tyana's glory against Nazareth's. Great was the consternation of the orthodox at the news that thankful Tyana, like ungrateful Nazareth, had nursed a prophet of blameless life, of miraculous power, of superabundant loving-kindness, and of heroic virtue. Both Apollonius of Tyana and Jesus of Nazareth were born in the same lustrum, if not in the same year;<sup>1</sup> both Tyana's babe and Bethle-

<sup>1</sup> The birth of Apollonius is assigned to the year B.C. 4. But, as everybody knows, the current computation of the beginning of the Christian era is incorrect, and the first year of our Lord ought to be dated four or five years earlier. If the Apollonian and Christian nativities both belong to the same year the coincidence is entitled to more attention than it has received.

hem's were said to have sprung from a divine Father and a human mother ; and both these holy ones drew their first breaths amid gracious portents and supernatural singings. Nor were these the only parallels in the memoirs of the Tyanean and the Nazarene. Blount's publication was therefore received with horror as an attempt to displace the religion of the Incarnation. In answer to the question, "Is this He that should come, or look we for another?" orthodox Christians had been accustomed to affirm boldly the uniqueness, sufficiency, and finality of Mary's Son : but, like a bolt from the blue, here was Philostratus opposing himself to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John and offering an alternative Messiah. Matthew Arnold was anticipated ; and the Greek ideal was pitted against the Hebrew. Fierce passions were let loose. Sermons, pamphlets, and volumes descended upon the presumptuous Blount like fireballs and hailstones ; and his adversaries did not rest until the authorities had forbidden him to

print the remaining six books of his translation.<sup>1</sup>

That Philostratus composed his *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* as a pagan counterblast to the Christian Gospels is an opinion which has been held by reputable scholars both before and after Blount's day. Philostratus wrote the *Life* about A.D. 216; and, in 305, Hierocles, who had been proconsul of Palmyra, of Bithynia, and finally of Alexandria, published a critical examination of Christianity in which he opposed the Apollonian to the Christian miracles. This work of Hierocles is lost, and we know it mainly from the able rejoinder of Eusebius.<sup>2</sup> Hierocles was further

<sup>1</sup> Blount repays the student more as a human being than as a scholar. His tomes are the graves of lost causes. He gave deep offence in arguing that King William held the throne by right of conquest—an argument according to which any stronger invader would have had the right to turn King William out. In 1698 he committed suicide because he could not marry his deceased wife's sister, with whom he had fallen violently in love.

<sup>2</sup> The reply of Eusebius to Hierocles was printed as an appendix to the text of Philostratus' *Life*, which

answered by Lactantius ; and it soon became as necessary for every Catholic saint or doctor of the fourth and fifth centuries to have an opinion about Apollonius of Tyana as it was for the French bishops of fifty years ago to have an opinion about Our Lady of La Salette. Eusebius handsomely recognised Apollonius as the first of philosophers. Lactantius and Arnobius did not deny his miracles, but referred them to magic.<sup>1</sup> St. Jerome also regarded

Aldus, with some trepidation, published in 1501. Aldus explained that he was giving "the antidote with the poison."

<sup>1</sup> The miracles of Apollonius are further ascribed to magic in the twenty-fourth of the *Quaestiones et Responsiones ad Orthodoxos*, a work formerly attributed to Justin Martyr. As the passage appears to have been written by an unknown author after the death of Philostratus, it is hardly worth reproducing here : but, lest any reader should be puzzled at hearing that Christian fathers admitted any non-Christian miracles as historical, it may be well to explain that many early Christians did not look upon the gods and goddesses of paganism as mere fictions. They vaguely imagined Jupiter and Juno and the rest as supernal personages who, having been dethroned and enfeebled by the Blessed Trinity, went on living stealthily like kings and queens in exile. Wagner's *Tannhäuser*, with the pious Minnesingers on the top of the hill and Venus in her grotto below, illustrates this state of mind.



him as a magician ; but he found things in his life to praise. St. Augustine, in arguing with the heathen, paid Apollonius a rather mild compliment by allowing that he was purer than Jove. The learned Bishop Sidonius Apollinaris praised the Tyanean and translated his *Life* into Latin. On the other hand, St. John Chrysostom branded the *Life* as false and Apollonius as a deceiver ; and St. John Chrysostom's gradually became the common view. In the ninth century Photius of Constantinople roundly denounced Philostratus' eight books as a tissue of lies. Nevertheless the cult of Apollonius lingered on almost to the end of the Middle Ages, as appears from the statement of Nicetas concerning the melting-down of certain bronze doors at Byzantium. These inestimable doors are said to have been inscribed with extracts from the Book of Rites, a lost work of Apollonius ; and they were destroyed so as to put an end to non-Christian beliefs and usages which had gathered round them. Of the Renaissance

writers who paid attention to Apollonius, the most remarkable was naturally the magic-loving and inquisitive Pico della Mirandola who, like Baronius, opined that the wonder-worker had made a pact with Satan. Méric Casaubon, in his relation of John Dee's dealings with spirits, asserted that the spirits with whom he had commerce, not Satan, gave Apollonius his power : but this has not settled the matter. Passing over Blount, with his friends and foes, both English and French, and coming to modern times, we find some writers following Voltaire, and placing the miracles of both Apollonius and Jesus in the same category, while others went on maintaining that in so far as Apollonius was not a myth he was an impostor. Broadly speaking, the partisans on both sides were equally uncritical, and they simply allowed their prepossessions for or against Christianity to determine their attitude to Christianity's supposed rival.

In the middle of the nineteenth century the most prevalent theory concerning the

work of Philostratus was Baur's. Baur, followed by Zeller, held that the *Life* was a "tendency-writing." The old opinion that Philostratus had deliberately sought to rival the Christian Gospels was adopted by Cardinal Newman in one of the least satisfactory of his writings; and it was much more fully set forth by T. W. Allies in his *Foundations of Christendom*. Later on, poor Apollonius fell among the essayists and was adjudged a blackguard and an impostor by J. A. Froude. At the present day, the casual student is confronted by a rich embarrassment of hypotheses. He may believe, with Dr. Campbell, that Philostratus has merely embellished and amplified a partially truthful tradition; or, with Chassang,<sup>1</sup> that the *Life* is a romanesque in which, behind all the fond inventions, there wanders the solid reality of a most original peripatetic philosopher—*un Dion Chrysostome*

<sup>1</sup> A. Chassang, *Apollonius de Tyane, sa Vie, ses Voyages, ses Prodiges, par Philostrate, etc.* Paris, 1862. This is one of the most notable works on the subject.

*doublé de Plotin ou de Porphyre*; or, with Professor Mahaffy, who dissents from Baur and Zeller, that we have to do with a mere fairy tale, composed for the purpose of painting an ideal sage, or a religious counterpart to the fabulous history of Alexander the Great; or, with Eunapé, that Apollonius was something midway between the gods and men; or, with Ammianus Marcellinus, that, like Pythagoras and Socrates, he was a privileged mortal who lived assisted by a familiar genius; or, with the abbé Freppel, that he was "a Don Quixote of philosophy," Damis being his Sancho Panza.

Meanwhile good progress has been made in the dispassionate criticism, on modern principles, of the text and its sources. The text of Kayser (who, by the way, regards the contents of the *Life* as fabulous) is the best.<sup>1</sup> As for the sources, the most indus-

<sup>1</sup> Third Edition. Leipzig, 1870. This third edition embodies the improvements of Westermann and of the Italian brothers Piccolo. Kayser's Preface describes the extant MSS.

trious and sharp-eyed sifting of them so far has been done by Jessen ;<sup>1</sup> but there is room for an industrious philologist with enough sense of style to enable him to discriminate between Philostratus' own diction and any older memorabilia of Apollonius which may be preserved verbatim in the *Life*.

From what has been said, it will be apparent that the question of Apollonius is almost wholly bound up with the question of Philostratus. Outside the writings of Philostratus, and the works to which they have given rise, very few allusions to Apollonius are to be found. It is true that Appuleius spoke of him with respect, and that Lucian, also writing in the second century, spurned him as an impostor ; and we have the assurance of Lampridius that the

<sup>1</sup> J. Jessen, *Apollonius von Tyana und sein Biograph Philostratus*. Hamburg, 1885. The British Museum librarians have bound up the national copy of this work along with a penny dreadful entitled *The Life of Dick Turpin, Prince of Highwaymen*.

Emperor Alexander Severus placed in his private chapel a statue of Apollonius along with statues of Christ, Abraham, and Orpheus. It seems also true that Marcus Aurelius vowed a temple in his honour, and that Hadrian, with reverent pomp, deposited his writings in the splendid palace at Antium, whither pilgrims flocked daily in crowds to see them. But one may fairly say that, without Philostratus, Apollonius had survived merely as a shadow of a shade. The credibility of Philostratus is, therefore, a prime consideration.<sup>1</sup>

It was the Empress Domna Julia who set Philostratus to work. This remarkable woman, who deserves fuller recognition,

<sup>1</sup> Vopiscus, whose literary activity was seventy years later than that of Philostratus, intended to write a life of Apollonius (whom he regarded as more than a man), but did not persevere. Tascius Victorianus, Nichomachus, and the Egyptian epic-poet Soterichus are said to have composed lives of the Tyanean; but no traces of these works remain. A reference in Dion Crassus is contemporary with Philostratus.

was the daughter of Bassianus, priest of the Sun at Emesa in Syria. Surrounded by artists and men of letters, she dispensed enlightened patronage to thought and learning.<sup>1</sup> Paganism was making its last rally against the new religion to which Constantine, only ten years later, was destined to surrender. Gibbon does not admit that the *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* was intended as a pagan stroke of offensive-defence, and those who agree with him are entitled to their opinion: but it is hard to believe that Philostratus began his task without any recollection of the Christian evangels. He confesses that he had "embellished" the materials out of which he pretended to have built his work. These materials (excluding four books on Apollonius by Maeraganes,<sup>2</sup> which Philostratus describes as untrustworthy) are said to have been the book of

<sup>1</sup> Like Blount, another sponsor of Apollonius, Domna Julia committed suicide.

<sup>2</sup> There is a passing mention of Maeraganes' books in Origen, *Contra Celsum*.

Maximus of Ægæ,<sup>1</sup> where Apollonius spent his early manhood, at the College of Æsculapius, and a much more important account of Apollonius' travels from the pen of his disciple Damis.

If it be granted for the moment that Damis and Maximus truly lived and breathed, and that their manuscripts lay at the elbow of Philostratus as he wrote, it will still be evident that those who would set up an historical Apollonius against the historical Jesus are at a disadvantage. Whatever may be believed as to a supposed primitive Christian gospel, no open-minded scholar can deny that the writings ascribed to Matthew, Mark, and Luke, in much the same form as we know them to-day, were extant in the first century of the Christian era: but, in the case of Apol-

<sup>1</sup> Those who do not prefer to regard Apollonius of Tyana as a rival to Jesus of Nazareth will be glad to learn that the college at Ægæ eventually became Christian, and that the poor-sick were treated there without money and without price.



lonius, we have, at the best, an avowedly embellished third-century redaction of contemporary records which have perished. It is exactly as though our earliest *Life of Jesus of Nazareth* should have been composed in the same year as the Nicene Creed. Worse still, there is no external evidence of the existence of Damis and Maximus and their writings; and the internal evidence, if any, stands suspect for the curious reason about to be given.

One of the few extant works of Philostratus is his *Imagines*, which claims to be a sort of *catalogue raisonné* to four and sixty pictures in a villa at Naples.<sup>1</sup> The book is highly interesting as the earliest continuous effort in art-criticism which has come down to us: but, on grounds which cannot be stated here, many students of Philostratus have concluded that there was no such villa and no such gallery of pictures. If this conclusion be sound Philostratus was not only the first art-critic, but also the first of

<sup>1</sup> There are French translations of the *Imagines*.

those demure men of letters whose delight is to play solemn hoaxes in which a list of sham sources and authorities ushers in a show of mock erudition and a pretence of critical processes. In other words, if there were no pictures at Naples there may have been no Damis taking notes in the wake of the shadowy Apollonius, and no Maximus ransacking his memory in the College of Æsculapius; in which case the Apollonius of Philostratus becomes an ingenious example of literary confectionery, something like the ox of barley and honey, sacrificed by the Pythagorean Empedocles of Agrigentum, which Philostratus mentions in the first chapter of the *Life*.<sup>1</sup> It is fair to add that the *Imagines* might never have been impugned if a belief in the fabulous character of the *Life* had not first established

<sup>1</sup> The *Life* is one of the 269 books reviewed by Photius of Constantinople in his precious *Bibliotheca*. While denouncing the matter of the work as unedifying fiction, Photius handsomely acknowledges its literary charm.

itself in its readers' heads : but the doubt exists, with its proper arguments, and goes to complicate one of the most alluring of literary puzzles. That Philostratus was a fanciful writer, hungry for the marvellous and prone to fine writing, further appears from his *Eroica*. Indeed, Chassang calls the *Eroica* the key to the problem.

So much by way of introduction to the case of Apollonius in general. And now the reader will perhaps bear with a justification of this little book in particular. As Blount's translation is only an obsolete fragment, and as Berwick's almost inaccessible version contains a superabundance of misrenderings and lacks all the flavour of the original, Dr. Campbell and I are wishful, either by our own efforts or by stirring up somebody better fitted for the task, to fill a gap in English libraries with a more satisfactory translation. Further, as the one problem involves the other, we have in mind a translation of the *Imagines* (a book which has

never been turned into English), accompanied by reproductions of such Pompeian and other wall-paintings as may throw light upon the text. But life is short; and, as every one knows who has made the experiment, Philostratus is a troublesome author to translate. We are, therefore, sending up a *ballon d'essai* in the form of the present volume, which is addressed to general readers rather than to scholars who can peruse Philostratus in his own Greek. Should we find a sufficiently large public interested in Apollonius and his biographer we shall be encouraged to carry out our plan.

In the following pages Dr. Campbell has sought to recover Apollonius of Tyana from the dust of controversy and to picture him as he existed in the minds of his more reverent and spiritually minded believers. How far such an Apollonius is identical with the mage who was certainly born in Tyana, or how far he is a literary fiction, or how far he is an ideal saint sublimated from

the rarest aspirations of the finer spirits in that pagan society which Christianity had begun to leaven—these are polemics from which Dr. Campbell has purposely abstained. He has, however, rounded off his short study by contrasting some of the practices and doctrines of this Cappadocian, who is well-nigh forgotten, with some words and works of that Galilean who has conquered the world.

ERNEST OLDMEADOW.

*July, 1908.*

# I

## APOLLONIUS OF TYANA

A STRANGE distinctive figure, clad in white linen and not in garments wrought of skins ; with feet unsandalled and with locks unshorn ; austere, reserved, and of meagre mien ; with eyes cast upon the ground as was his manner, Apollonius of Tyana drew to him, with something of a saint's attraction, all simple folk, and yet won as intimates Emperors of Rome.

Through his love for all life and his swift appreciation of the beauty of the human form, he early drew nigh to the sufferings of the body and became acquainted with the sufferings of the soul. He sought to heal, or at least to soothe, some of the distresses, physical and spiritual, of poor humanity ; and to such a singular degree of skilfulness

did he attain in the healing arts of his day that even the sacred oracles of Ægæ and of Delphi, pronouncing him more than mortal, referred the distempered body and the smitten soul to him for relief, knowing that from his very presence proceeded a peculiar virtue, a benign influence, an almost theurgic power.

By reason also of his devotion to a lofty philosophy, he, at an unusually early age, elected to be poor when the world laboured to be rich; and he learned to esteem temperance when men would consider luxury alone. As a youth, he broke away from the *status* of family and city when society was tribal and communal, preferring—at critical and even at ordinary periods—to live alone and to think alone and ultimately, as it happened, to die alone.

By years of silence and contemplation, by extensive travel, and by a continuous spiritual and worldly experience he deepened and developed, in no minute measure, an originally powerful and intense personality; and

so it was that at length he became the admiration not only of all countries through which he passed, but of the whole wide Roman and Hellenic world. Cities sent envoys and embassages to him decreeing him public favours; monarchs bestowed special dignities upon him, counting him worthy to be their counsellor; incense was burnt before his altars; and after his death divine honours were paid to his images, which had been erected, with great enthusiasm, in all the temples of the gods. Nor did his fame evanesce. All down the ages his name has carried in it something of a hurricane; for speculative critics of both early and latter days have thought to find in the life of this exceptional character a parallel to the life of Christ, and to ground an argument thereon against the supernatural claims of the Son of Mary. Hence for centuries even the name of Apollonius was odious to Christians, for it seemed the very Gospel of the Son of God was at stake; and Christian apologists, on their part, in self-defence (such is human



nature) were not lacking to attack fiercely their adversaries' champion and to denounce him as little better than an impostor, a sorcerer, and a magician. On this account they have generally failed to understand the man. They have lacked, at least in their combative approach to him, that sweet affection for signal worth, that gracious patience and generous sympathy for nobleness which is absolutely necessary to comprehend a new or startling character or mode of life.

Moreover, they have entirely overlooked the society and culture from which the man took his origin and of which he was a product—that mellowing and, even then, ancient Greek culture, decadent, no doubt, yet still influential, of which at its more perfect epoch we in our age can catch but some partial ideas from the marvellous designs stamped on a Macedon coin, the elegant shape of some beautiful Phocian brazier or Attic tripod, from the satisfying and grand grace-of-line still existing in some old Athenian temple, or in passionate

drama and profound philosophy—that culture, in a word, which has shaped and informed the whole world's art.

So the dust of centuries of controversy has obscured this wonderful personality. A name which once illuminated with a singular splendour the mighty Roman Empire has been transmitted to us dimmed, if not altogether obscured, by uncouth hands; and there comes to us with an increasingly regretful surprise the knowledge that we can never now quite appraise to its correct value the beauty and spirituality of the life of one whose heart was with the hearts of men and whose mind moved among celestial things; whose native city was accounted, for his sake, a sacred city, a city of refuge, a privileged city, one that enjoyed the peculiar right of electing its own magistrates and enacting its own decrees, and whose coins were struck, in consequence of her son's greatness, with the proud inscription: *Τύανα ἱερα, ἄσυλος, αὐτόνομος*.

## II

### THE BIRTH AND YOUTH OF APOLLONIUS

**I**N the dawn of one of those consummate summer days which pass so calmly and serenely by in Hellenic lands that even a rustic Cappadocian might well conceive them to be the immense slow-moving thoughts of Zeus, Apollonius first breathed this old world's air in the same year (according to the latest computations) as the Babe of Bethlehem. A wondrous child surely—born at early morn, just at the time when, doubtless, the finely fashioned feet of the Sun-God fevered the mountain tops and his purple mantle trailed gloriously through the dark vales. For in the imaginative appreciation of a later day (the only

original appreciation,<sup>1</sup> based on fragmentary facts and floating fancies, which has come down the centuries to us) it is recorded that Apollo was his reputed father and that birth was given to him in the flowering fields around Tyana. Thither his mother, attended by her maidens, had gone forth to gather the gentle buds still sealed with dew, plucking, so to say, the sweet blossom of maternity to the joyous chants of swans, sacred birds consecrated to the God of Light, which with glad rush of wing and vent of voice circled the mead wherein she lay, pre-saging, as it would seem, in some sort, the perfect purity of the man that was to be.

The child, of flower-like form and grace, seemed as he grew to be endowed with such singular bodily health and bright bloom of countenance that the hearts of mothers of other children, less favoured than he, would be ever touched with an envious wistfulness; for there was about him such a pure and delightful beauty as, in their eyes, could

<sup>1</sup> Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius*, written about 216 A.D.

only have been given him by a signal favour of the Gods.

To the natural delight of the growing lad in things comely and cheerful about him, and to his peculiar esteem for all that was externally bright and affluent in nature or man, there was allied, at least during his formative years, a profound disquiet, an almost visible distress, a kind of revulsion from excessive sympathy, as indeed it was, at faces or forms tinted with the wan hues of pain or decay, as at something lacking in the fulness of life or the perfection of form or natural grace. Meshed in a strangely intimate way with his capacity for enjoyment was a certain faculty for fear or grief. The keen joy, for example, which he evinced in the fresh vitality of spring or in the full strength of summer would be ever chastened with the anticipation of inevitable change, of sunless hours and of darkness. The fading of a flower or the inconsolable crying of a little child would be, to his boyish mind, the shadow, faint perhaps, yet certain,

of the deeper and more enduring darkness which is Death.

He had not, of course, as yet attained to the estimation of the grandeur and distinction of Death, its unique and supreme beauty, its natural loveliness when considered as part of the economy of Life. But as he grew in years it was given him to catch something of its sweetness as of the perfume of some hidden flower.

One may perhaps venture to indicate certain influences which tended to develop in Apollonius, as he advanced into manhood, that lofty reverence in which he held all life, and deepened, as a consequence, his dislike to all that apparently degraded or impaired it; certain sources, as they undoubtedly were, from which he drew the inspiration and the enthusiasm of his life, which enabled him to catch the vision of a deathless destiny and, even, at length (Oh happy man!) to make his life conformable to his dream.

First in fundamental importance of these three persuasions was that blithe spirit of

swift and joyful elevation, yet of swift and delicate melancholy, which was essentially Greek, and which pervaded Greece and the Grecian world : not, of course, that supreme Hellenism which for a short season, some centuries previous, had soared serene and grand beyond the range of all vain questionings and unrest, beyond all that would in any way limit or diffuse consummate conception or execution ; but that later spirit of aftermost efflorescence or extremematurity—that *decadence*, as we would call it—still bright and glorious, but suggestive of oblique suns in the August month, when the inevitable fatigue of the year's glory is already in the air, and when the shadow of shortening days already steals, like a grief, into the face of heaven. Native and not alien to this blithe and buoyant spirit and to this soft and tender melancholy was the genius of Apollonius. For the Greeks were really at heart a wistful people, shy in very deed of the sorrows of life and timid of the terrors of death. They turned ever in-

stinctively to the light; loving the glad sunshine and the gleaming smile—for shadow and tears had no inherent loveliness that they should desire them. Thus they would incline from all that would sadden or depress. They saw the sombre side of things, but they would ever avert their gaze. They would be at pains, even, to change a sad tale into a sweet myth: a murdered youth they would translate into a bright star or a beautiful flower; and the very Erynnides or Furies they softened into the Eumenides or Merciful Ones.

But this fundamental and emotional trait in the young man's character was powerfully acted upon by that new influence which was invading the whole Hellenist world, and which was displacing, or at least transforming, the ancient faiths which were exclusively local, tribal, or civic. The old academic systems of Zeno and Epicurus had ceased to touch the heart, and the older rational systems of Aristotle and Plato were comfortless and cold. Scepticism had clamoured



awhile for support, but the souls of men had shrunk from it. And now from the shining East new worships and new faiths came streaming in with a sense of sacred, almost sacramental, mystery and inspiration:<sup>1</sup> worships which, beneath all multiplicity, made for unity, and which, beneath all variety, yearned for God; attractive worships, with rites more magnificent and orgies more august than any previously known or than that offered by the simple service or by the quiet prayer presented to Here or Athene; worships vivified with enthusiasm and inspired with poetry, and which, notwithstanding at times gaudy and meretricious shows, wild and uncontrolled revivals, and mysteries mingled with debasing extravagances, yet contained the eternal truths of vital religion wherein was liberty for the soul and a new way for the spirit, where the hithertofore prisoned and purblind being could soar into a loftier and a

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Professor Mahaffy's *Greek World under Roman Sway* (Macmillan), pp. 181-266, to which I am indebted.

rarer air, and thence, in ascension, could descry afar off the marvellous vision of an endless life beyond this earthly day. And further, in these new faiths, appeal was made not to the confined or local, civil or tribal cults—cults that were purely individualist and only sundered man from man—but to society at large, to all humanity, to the whole world, and indicated the unity and brotherhood of man and the unity and fatherhood of God. Hence when the dulcet sound of the sweet clanging cymbals and of the soft reeds of the Phrygian Cybele warmed the air, or the matinal chant of Mithra and the nocturnal note of Serapis stirred it strangely, the flexible and acutely syncretic mind of the Greek comprehended the new voice and received the new hope; and Apollonius, feeling his spiritual thirst assuaged and his yearning stanchèd, though preserving the older aristocratic forms and institutions and conservative beliefs, opened his heart to what was best in the new faiths and accepted them, not merely for the poetical

and enthusiastic elements which predominated, but for the active virtues, the practical conduct, which took form in a unitive life, at once common, corporate, and continuous.

Lastly, came an actual experience which consolidated and fused the otherwise unfixed and nebulous thoughts of the sensitive youth : a delightful visit of four years' duration to the cool groves and silent temple of Æsculapius at Ægæ. Hither he had come in the hope of wooing or winning some of the reluctant and elusive secrets of Nature or the God, by means of which he would thenceforth be enabled to approach with a sympathy that would soothe and heal the ageless misery of man or uphold for a time his agony that endures. Here in this solemn temple, reared in all the austere magnificence of Greek conception great with Greek restraint, he became so devoted to the Master and so earnest in his service that it was said the God, in his clemency, found peculiar pleasure in performing many and strange cures in the

presence of so faithful a witness as his servitor ; and here as one of a great community of devout men, bound together by a moral discipline, possessing a common rule, and, as it might appear to him, enjoying a privileged relationship with the God that medicined the bodies and souls of sick and sorrowful men, he saw and learned in actual practice the *ordered*, as well as the corporate, life.

### III

#### THE CONTEMPLATIVE LIFE

**I**N his daily occupation of restoring the disordered body and the disarrayed mind, and in his continual contact with the great healing phenomena of Nature, problems and profound questions, which had in earlier years presented themselves incidentally to the mind of the young disciple, now gradually became more recurrent and insistent. But an event which about this time took place suddenly fanned these smouldering speculations into full flame.

One placid evening, while the memory of the day's splendid rule still lived in the cool and silent air, a messenger, compassed with all the customary signs of grief, was seen slowly wending his way up the long avenue of cypresses which led to the great

court of the sacred college. A certain faint odour of sweet incense in the air and an occasional splash of some gentle fountain spoke, no doubt, to him of devotion and purity, and of that higher and mysterious Power who here deigned to heal all the maladies of the soul and body. He asked for one Apollonius of Tyana, and having been conducted into one of the ante-chambers, the walls of which were coloured and carved with the history of the Son of Apollo, he presented to the youthful student, who had silently entered, a letter with the sad intelligence that his father had suddenly died. The painful news so shook his being that it was some time before he could control his emotion; and even for many days thereafter, neither the effluence of his priestly ministrations nor the absolving calm of the sacred precincts could still his mind. The thought of the old home with all its sweet associations and his childhood came to him weighted with a sorrow and a regret which he could scarcely bear.

But above all broke out before his mental vision the great question of Life and Death. Before it was to him but a purely philosophic or academic question. Now it became one of supreme and intensely personal and practical importance. It rose and demanded answer, at once immediate, clear and decisive.

In common with all Hellenist culture Apollonius had esteemed the more beautiful and joyous aspects of life—delicate shapes and lovely forms, lines that would almost seem to be lyrical, and colours that would almost seem to sing. But as he looked on all things he saw that nothing remained. Nothing lived. Πάντα ρεῖ. Οὐδὲν μένει. Everywhere there was disintegration and decay; and that not always of a benign and gentle, but often of a violent and even cruel, character. Something, sooner or later, would cut athwart the sweet skein of existing things. The flower that had but blown yesterday, and which would have glowed to-day with a surpassing beauty, was last

night shattered by heavy rain. That little head of golden curls, which last week was a glory to behold, was now but a painful memory in a mother's broken heart. That lovely city by the sea, that city of song and laughter, of precious stones and fine linen, of rich colour and incense, in one hour, had come to nought, and was desolate and full of grief. Nothing was sure. To-morrow always lay behind the door of Death. But whether the Difficult Day came by degrees or of a sudden, in silence or in sound, the Horror inevitably fell; until it seemed that behind all Life, whether in the shadow of night or in the blaze of midday sun, there ever followed "Murder with his silent bloody feet." He himself had been struck with it even as a lad. He could no doubt recall many a Spring when the Breath of Life itself appeared to inspire the whole Earth, just at the time when troops of Cappadocian youths would assemble to pay their customary honours to Demeter. Attracted first by the sound of their simple



hymn, which was chanted alternately by the rustic companies, as they moved forward in measured and rhythmic steps of stately procession or solemn dance, he would draw near to look with a sort of natural curiosity. But he would grow strangely troubled as suddenly, in a lull between the antiphonal refrain, he would hear the piteous bleating of a little lamb, and anon he would see it, a victim dedicated to the Goddess, led thrice around the tender crops, clad in rich vestments and garlanded with flowers ; and his soul would shudder at the sight, and the pools of pity in his heart would tremble as he saw that the life which he loved was about to be quenched.

And now at a later age, when his sensitive intellect had received an acute emotion and sudden stimulus in the great bereavement he had suffered, the old problem of Light and Darkness, of Flux and Repose, of the launching Lightning Flash and the Voice that roars after it in the Dark, presented itself to him with inevitable urgency.

Brooding over the many speculative systems of philosophical culture, he felt, to a disturbing degree, the unsatisfying spirit of their results.

Beneath the countless combinations under which Life was manifest ; beneath the perpetual cycle of Birth, Growth, Death, and Dissolution ; beneath the chastening separative elements of time and place, the gulf betwixt soul and soul, the infinite distance between God and Man—was there co-ordination or unity ? Was there a golden thread to be found to lead him out of this vast and intricate Daedalism, this agony that was ageless, this misery that endured ? For long days and through weary nights he sought, in severe intellectual contemplation, some answer to his questionings ; and partly through that idealism which was ever an element in his character and partly through that activity which was purely physical and which his physical powers demanded, his thoughts went back to the old, dim, theological and supra-sensible doctrines of Pytha-

goras—vague, of course, and very far-off, yet containing within themselves principles suggestive of harmony and unity;<sup>1</sup> and in the life of the Sage himself there was the example of actual and real behaviour in every-day life.

But meantime the affairs of his family required his presence in his native city; and so, after some days of silent meditation, and pondering still, with an entirely quickened interest, all the sayings of the great sages on the strange and baffling Mystery of Death, he set out for his own country; bidding farewell for a while to the peaceful College and carrying with him the regrets and sympathies of the whole Æsculapian brotherhood.

On reaching Tyana he found that his property (for he was not yet of age) had been seized by his elder brother, who, with no eye of love, beheld him, as coming to demand and claim his own. But Apollonius, feeling it to be his vocation to renew the

<sup>1</sup> *Vide* Mahaffy's *Greek World*, etc., already cited.

sacrifice of his affections and to dedicate himself afresh to sacred Philosophy, with sweet words and kind looks, bestowed half of his inheritance on his brother, and by this act reclaimed him from an evil life : for in very sooth the good man loves most and suffers most and most forgives.

Having thus for a time freed himself from worldly cares, he answered with exceeding joy the call of his heart ; and withdrawing to the solitudes of Cappadocia and Cilicia he sought to honour the Silent Muse and by an actual example to place life above philosophy or reasoning—in a word to put his philosophical theories into real practice. Here for five years he preserved unbroken silence, contemplating divine things, until it almost seemed that his life had become one long colloquy with God. And here, in the deep shadows of the Taurus range or in the dark pass of Pylæ, by the bleak and lonely Euxine Sea or by the sinuous bendings of the Halys River, he found the immense Peace of Nature and took it into the sanc-

tuary of his being. Welcoming it there, preserving it there, almost worshipping it there as the presence of a God in the shrine of his soul, he learnt so to identify himself with that Spirit, not in a momentary participation or fitful approach, but in the continuous communion which was his life, that it never thereafter ceased to sanctify and control his whole existence, passing out into all his days to come and projecting itself into every future thought and act, however trivial, absorbing and informing each with a destinative calm. In following this mode of life Apollonius was not altogether alone. He was merely adopting for his own requirements what had already become a fairly common custom throughout Greece. City life, in that old land of liberty, had grown so exacting and so full of stress that a great re-action had set in for a return to Nature—to the simple life. It was then something as it is to-day in England, where all the activities of life have centred into huge and hustling cities, in which the struggle to live

is becoming fiercer every day, and the piteous cry of the weaker ones already fills the air: "Back to the land. Back to Nature. Back to the simple life." In the days of Apollonius, then, we find persons casting off the bonds of urban life and seeking, instead, the freedom and the calm of fields and forests; and there are many instances of the extremes to which this life was carried by those whose one desire was to escape the weary world.

The fame of so earnest a Solitary passed soon through Cappadocia, Cilicia and Pamphylia; and those who were weary with the weight of life, and those who were sad with Faith's perplexities, came, like pilgrims, to the haunts of the Tyanean. "Wouldest thou but talk with Apollonius, thy relief is *sure*." So spake the sacred Oracle of Ægæ, and relying upon words spoken from the very tripod of the God, multitudes came to him for comfort and for help—for the days of a good man are swift—some to copy the manner of his life, taking some of his

heavenly acts or virtues to polish them, so to say, in their own persons ; others, again, more pious, believing in his thaumaturgic powers, would come that he might pray over them, at least silently. As it is with us to-day, so it was with them then, it is only he who doubts miracle must cease to pray, for when one prays one asks a miracle : but all, even the most wretched, wished to see him and, if possible, to converse with him, but at all events to be near him, for they instinctively felt, as we do in our time also, that in the presence of what is great and good there goes out a hidden virtue for the weak.

So numerous and so intent did earnest seekers become, that a proverb swiftly ran amongst the inhabitants of those places, as they beheld the ceaseless streams of votaries hastening hither and thither through the land that they might be entered in his discipleship : “ Whither run ye,” it went ; “ whither run ye so swift ? Is it to see the young man ? ” And the young man,

possessing this singular quality of attraction, was so touched with inexpressible compassion for the countless souls, burdened with spiritual distress or bodily infirmity, that, though in no ways breaking through his self-ordained restrictions, he would often silently enfold in his thin palms the pained hand of another until, through the very sympathy of contact and tenderness of touch, it would appear that the burden of sorrow had passed away and the physical suffering had ceased to be ; or again, upon some other occasion, stretching forth his white hands over some afflicted face, he would say nothing, but with eyes compassionate and dim would speak with tears, "showing kind thoughts in symbol."

Something so full of grace and sweet, we are told, was in his manner of expressing his thoughts that his very eyes and his hands and the motions of his head would make significant answer to whatever was said by those who sought his counsel or his help.



During the earlier part of this great period of silent reflection, when Loneliness and Silence first made for him unbroken paths to God, the mind of Apollonius must have dwelt long on the various harmonies of Day and Night, the moving rhythms of Summer and Winter, and all the recurrent *motifs* in Life and Death, which made the whole Universe seem Music—religious music with an austere and deep reserve.

It is, of course, quite impossible for us now, after two thousand years, to know, not to say, to precise, all the various searchings of the mind of this son of Pythagoras during these years of secret communing. Like the "pious poet," in *Tristesse de la Lune*,<sup>1</sup> into the hollow of whose hand the moon had dropped a pale tear, irised like a piece of opal with her own reflections, he has hidden the lovely pearl-like secret in his heart far from the eyes of our day; but at least we may conjecture the movements

<sup>1</sup> One of Charles Baudelaire's poems in *Les Fleurs du Mal* (Calmann-Levy. Paris).

of his mind, as following the mystic measures and inward music of his great master, and studying, in his own vital experiences, his exquisite science of Harmony and Law, Proportion and Number, he arrived gradually at the conception of the abstract Unity of God. Ideas which had formerly met and long struggled within his soul, and problems in Life and Philosophy which long had seemed irreconcilable, now appeared to harmonise and resolve in the new Synthesis ; for he saw—indistinctly at first, but nevertheless with an increasing clearness—beneath the multiplicity of gods, beneath all gods, but one God, and in all their various rites and worships but the Protean shapes of one Divinity ; and also beneath the multiplicity of life, beneath all life, but one Life—Life deathless and strong—the Life the Gods or rather the God enjoyed in full, the Life Man partook of in part. He felt that under the superficial aspect of all life ; beneath its fleeting forms and changing colours, melodies, and per-

fumes ; beneath the various and ever fugitive phases or states which mortals name Birth, Growth, Decay, Death, and the like, was the basal Life-stream, the eternal Life-force in ceaseless energy, on the surface of which he himself existed for a moment, participating for that moment, in some measure, in its vitality. So beneath all life there was one Life. Though men died, yet there *lived* the mighty dead, inasmuch as Life and Death grew out of the one Stem. There was Life deeper, more intimate than that whereof men knew—a Life which bound in one the living and the dead ; a Life which was the Life of the Eternal God. And since all life was one, the human soul was linked to the Divine by identity of Substance, the Ethereal Light Substance, which Apollonius conceived to be the Essence of the Deity, and which he believed was shared, in a lesser or greater degree, by the soul that is good. So he, devoted to the service of the divine, believed that he himself was in a sense divine, and in a

sense God. The lesser or greater degree of deification depended entirely upon himself, who could annihilate it by an evil life or could develop it by a pure and excellent one. Exceptional holiness would produce exceptional wisdom; and exceptional wisdom would produce exceptional fulness of Life. Hence, he appraised the necessity for the uplifted life, the life free from all excess or intemperance, the ascetic life, keeping the custody of the senses, guarding the gravity of the outer man, presenting sweetness of manner to all and severity towards himself, refraining from destroying any life whatever, on account of its inestimable value, and even refusing to eat flesh or to drink wine lest such an act would profane, though but in a minor degree, what was after all to him the only true temple in all the world—the temple of the human body. Thus the new Life—a *nuova vita*—opened out before him, broadening ever more and more and demanding in the devious byways, no less than in the main avenue, of his life

a care and attention which he had theretofore not even suspected. O fair white Hands, how can you now touch feet that are foul? O gentle Eyes, bright with the burning breath of an unimaginable beauty, how can you bear to gaze on souls that are deformed? Why do you now seek for faces that are tinted with the wan hues of pain or decay as at something lacking in the fulness of life or the perfection of form?

In every dead rose there is the remembrance of the colour of the Dawn. In every death-bell the *memorare* of the Angelus; and in the mystery of Death is wrapped the mystery of immortal Love. And so it was that by the method of Pythagoras, of him who had attuned the ears of men to measured movement and ordered melody, the formerly insoluble mystery of sorrow and suffering seemed to clear, and the early difficulty of decay and death to melt away. These, heretofore, seemed out of place in the economy of life. Now

they had their rightful setting there. There was the divine necessity of death. There was also the divine necessity of suffering. Δεῖ παθεῖν. Δεῖ ἀπαρῆσασθαι ἑαυτόν. He must renounce this fugitive phase that men name life in order to gain the fulness of the endless and fundamental Life. And in this renunciation he would find increase of virtue. *Virtus vulnere virescit.*

In his younger days he had instinctively sought Good. When, at times, he joined in the solemn θιάσοι and sacred ὀργεῶνες how many a secret joy had he not experienced, as in some marvellously rich moments of supreme adoration he had felt himself, as it would seem to him, seized and flooded with an inexpressible measure of the Divine Light-Substance, with a sense of a Presence that could only be of God! But now there must be also the more strenuous hours, the days that would be difficult, the years that would be dark. Strenuous, difficult, and dark they might be, but in the arid wastes he at least would now see

streams of waters bursting forth, and where desert places were, there would be pools moving with the music of tall reeds and green grass. A highway would be there and a way. A way called the way of holiness, where the unclean in heart and lips could not pass, but where the pure in heart, though simple, could not lose his way or err.

There is a picture in the Louvre which, though unfinished, is so graciously and so subtly conceived that some have, not injudiciously, ascribed it to Leonardo da Vinci, that master of complex meanings and strangely implicated thoughts in line and colour. It is entitled *A Bacchus*. Far away, through a liquid splendour of midday heat and mist, peers a low but massive mountain. Midway in heaven's high blue a slender birch hangs out its delicacies of silvery foliage, floating all tremulous and pale. On a nearer, though still distant, slope, a dappled deer with lifted antlers scents the air; and the green sward close

by is bright with flowers. But in the cool shade of a rich brown bank is seated one—prominent and grand—whose splendid and naked loveliness is a delight to see. His eyes, deep, dark and purple-warm, are those of a god. A god's, too, his brow, decked with the vine-leaf. The Bacchic thyrsus lies along his curved arm. His countenance is earnest. His gaze intense. He wins your attention—but only to divert it. With long and fascinating forefinger he points invitingly from the sunlit champaign to something dark, far-off and unknown. Then in some unimaginable way the loin-cloth of leopard's fur becomes a girdle of camel's hair; the slanting thyrsus a desert staff; and the form of earnest entreaty a prophet. Surely it is the Baptist who, turning his back upon the sunlit world, would have you know that more enduring joys lie beyond that impenetrable darkness towards which he points. And well might this canvas depict Apollonius of Tyana during the period of his reclusion in the fairer



fields of silent Cappadocia, directing, so to say, the passer-by or devoted inquirer away from the wearying brightness and passing pleasures of his ephemeral day to the mystery of a peace far off and unknown, and only to be attained by passing through the shadows and severities of life.

## IV

### THE ACTIVE LIFE

**B**UT now for him the contemplative life had ceased. The active was to begin. The long period of extreme mental tension had ended. A fresh mode of life was to be undertaken.

Some say that those long years of severe self-restraint formed the appointed initiation into the Pythagorean brotherhood. We can find no organised Pythagorean society, no actual brotherhood, into which at the time Apollonius was received. On the contrary, we find him then Master : a follower indeed of Pythagoras, but yet a Master. He calls disciples : they follow. He commands : they obey.

He was already famous. Renowned for his skill in the intricate laws of ritual and

the hieratic mysteries, he was yet more celebrated for the spiritual heights and lofty mental planes to which he had attained. His speech too had in it a kind of celestial eloquence, so excellent indeed and so weighted with rich thought that, it is said, his very words were collected as in chalices out of which all who would quenched their thirst ; and the graces of his person were so attractive that they were even remarkable in a land where beauty of form or address was the common property of the race.

Yet there were deeper excellences to be acquired, wider aims to be achieved, higher powers to be attained. Whither then would he go ? To Greece, the home of all culture, the hearth whereon the fire of faith and science had been kindled and had flamed ? No, not now. Some centuries ago, if he had then lived, he might have looked to Athens or to Corinth. But not now. For with the Roman conquest of Greece, Macedonia and Asia Minor, the fairer religions of Greece had become degraded to a con-

siderable extent by the materialistic Latin thought. Even then, in Apollonius's time, Hellenic religion was vastly higher than Roman. It always was. The Romans never possessed a true religious sense. A hard and narrow ceremonialism satisfied them. They produced no legends. They evolved no myths. They never even conceived of Gods. They made no representations of them. They worshipped they knew not what. Such they were in earlier times. Such they were really still. The Greeks, on the other hand, were by nature devout and imaginative. Their religions were expansive, flexible, adaptable. They marked the spiritual forces behind the natural phenomena. They conceived of these forces as deities ; and they gave them form in metal and stone and clay. The Greek artist pursued these conceptions ; and his sculptured or molten figures were no mere idols, but the representations of the mysterious Powers behind the natural objects of sense. Stand to-day before a marble statue of some noble Posei-

don or Glaucus, and you too will seem to hear the surging of the great waters in those ears, and you too will see all the ocean floating in those eyes. The Greeks believed in these forces. The Romans did not. The Greek approached them with head uncovered. The Roman refused to bare his head. The sons of Italy, if they prayed at all, prayed for such solid blessings as food and land and money. The sons of Greece sought for moral force and spiritual excellence ; for the Eastern counted on a future existence, the Western only on the present.

Hence one of the results of the Roman conquest and her sway was to lower and materialise Greek spiritual thought.

It may be well to qualify here the word "religion" as used in regard to the old Hellenic world. Religion, as we know it—the worship of a Supreme Being, ineffable, invisible, incomprehensible and eternal—was then non-existent. Even in the period of the highest culture it did not exist. Nay, it was actually avoided ; and one might almost say

that because it was avoided that lofty culture was reached. For the excellences of all Greek Art were achieved through the frank recognition of the limited scope of human powers. Within the definite bounds of the human mind, which they had explored and charted as we chart the seas, perfection was sought and attained. Outside that they refused to go. They never soared after the infinite God. He was out of sight, out of range, unknowable. Their very philosophies turned deliberately away from Him. Religion as the Greeks knew it for some centuries before the Christian era was the personification and cultus, always local and particular, of the vast and minor forces, full of mystery to their minds, of Wind and Sea and Forest and Mountain, and the Power behind all objects of sense and motion and thought. In course of time wider conceptions and deeper beliefs came in from Egypt through Crete and from the Far East countries. Amongst these newer faiths and rites were the Mysteries, but they were separate from,

and indeed antagonistic to, the true Hellenic culture. Time was to bring its revenge, and the years, ay the centuries, were to come when Greek minds would be all aflame with desire to sound the fathomless Thought of God, and when they would scale heights in the Nature and Essence of the Divine Being such as were never scaled before or since. But the time had not yet come. It was but the earliest moments of the Dawn. And here in the faintly tracked ways of early spiritual adventure we can trace the first sure desires for the Day, the first gropings towards the distant Light. And in the poor magician and dreamer, Apollonius of Tyana, we can see one who, looking up to heaven, essayed to ascend thither and to soar out of the narrow bounds and definite limits of human experience.

Another result of Roman rule was its withering effect upon the material and social life of the Greek-speaking peoples. We have noted how the religion of Rome was inferior to that of Greece. She was also

lower in the scale of civilisation. With her practical common sense she had recognised this ; and had left most of the great Greek social institutions intact to the conquered provinces. But otherwise her sway was blighting. Her financial administration was unjust and immoral. It depopulated and impoverished the whole Empire ; and it ruined the general material prosperity and the moral constitution of Hellenic cities and lands. Rome drained the wealth of all her conquered provinces, and the vast Empire was plundered for the support of the Imperial City. The accumulated treasures of centuries were shamefully dispersed in maintaining immense armies and in supplying grain gratuitously to feed hundreds of thousands of her idle citizens. As a consequence social and moral energy had declined. Honest labour was despised and considered a degradation. Corruption was rampant and religion was decadent. Countless numbers of Greeks were compelled to sell themselves as slaves because they could



not pay the extortionate and cruel impositions. The slave market was the only prosperous one.

Even many years after, when Apollonius was in the old land of liberty, endeavouring to reform her religion and rekindle her faith, he felt compelled to write to the Museum at Alexandria, then the great centre of learning and culture of the civilised world, in such words as these : *ἐβαρβαρώθην οὐ χρόνιος ὢν ἀφ' Ἑλλάδος ἀλλὰ χρόνιος ὢν ἐν Ἑλλάδι*. "I have become barbarised, not by staying away from Greece, but by staying in Greece."

How could he then turn Westward and look there for hope of better things? How could he draw inspiration from the materialistic Roman? The love of his country was in his heart. He longed to see her restored and reformed morally and spiritually: and his one clear and definite aim now was to fit himself for the great work—the work of his life—the restoration and revival of true religion, as he knew it, not

only in his own Hellenic land, but throughout the Roman Empire. A vast undertaking, a tremendous task! And where could he fit himself properly and adequately for it? Where, but in the East, whence had always come the higher faiths and hopes, the devotions and enthusiasms, without which religion is vain? Did not the Samian Sage himself seek, centuries previous, the lands beneath the rising sun and hold converse there with people pre-eminent in virtue and spiritual adventure? And Apollonius felt that he too must follow that great example if he were to succeed in the vast undertaking proposed to himself—the spiritual regeneration of life in the whole Roman and Hellenic world.

## V

### APOLLONIUS TRAVELS TO INDIA

THE call of many countries was in his ears. Where the voice of Wisdom called, there he would go—be it to the land of the Arabian famous for his perfumes, or to Egypt the country whence all the Gods, save Poseidon and Here, had come, or to the land upon the extreme verge of the world, beyond the confines of the flowing-robed Arsacidæ, beneath the earliest beams of the rising stars, where the keen crescent first cuts the blue. Yes! There from that far-off land of India the call was clearest. And there first he went.

Fastidious, not only in his person, but in his speech, he attached, prior to his departure, two domestics as secretaries, one eminent for the despatch with which he

wrote and the other for the remarkable beauty and the artistic form of his lettering.

On entering Mesopotamia, the Custom-house officer approached the travellers with his toll-book and requested the Sage to declare, for excisable purposes, what commodities he was bringing into the country. "Patience, Temperance, Justice, and Fortitude," replied Apollonius, naming these and other virtues by feminine names. The tax collector wrote each down carefully in his book and then inquired if they were his maids. "No," answered the philosopher, "they are my Mistresses."

After spending some time at Nineveh, where Damis, his disciple and *fidus Achates*, attached himself to his person, and having visited the great King of Babylon, he set out, with his followers, for India, mounted upon the royal camels and preceded by one bearing an ornament of gold upon its forehead, signifying thereby that one of the King's friends was on the road.

Each day the desire of the spiritual East

grew more and more on him ; and each day above the mighty Himalaya with their immense and silver screen of fretted pallid peaks, he saw, flashing more and more resplendent (for it was approaching summer) the glorious solar diadem of the Deity.

Day by day he journeyed on

O'er the aerial mountains which pour down  
Indus and Oxus from their icy caves,

wending his way through maze of mist and mountain, where no tree or flower could live, and snatching some little repose at times beneath the immense white Moon, the great Jewel of Asia, the Virginal Queen of Heaven, until at length he came to places clothed with aromatic plants, and saw the warm cinnamon growing on the high hills and the incense-bearing trees flowering in the valleys.

By many strange waters and sacred rivers he passed, and anon with joy beheld dark pilgrims, with eyes devout and mournful, pacing in prayer by their banks, calling the

streams by their names, and casting sweet-smelling flowers and fragrant spices into their softly murmuring waves.

In fine, after many months, the little party reached the sacred goal of their pilgrimage, the mystic Monsalvat, the Holy Hill inhabited by the Wise Men of the East. High up the mountain stood, like the Acropolis of Athens, defended on all sides by immense piles of rocks. A great mist crowned the summit, which seemed to raise itself aloft beyond the clouds into the very intimate music of the spheres.

Here now, at last, was the veritable Garden of the Gods, the paradise of solitary souls, where minds, alert and attentive, might enter and breathe a rarer and diviner air, and where, in its immense peace, the repose and sweet savour of contemplation, so ardently desired, could at length be fully attained.

With a graciousness refined to a perfect degree, the whole fraternity—both aged professors and young students—of the *φρον-*

τιστήριον received the Alastor-like guest; for he seemed to them like "a poet who had wandered all his life long through the world, seeking with a heart on fire for the flower-like face he could never find": and, on his part, he found in the brethren men who cared not for the propagation of the vine or the tilling of the ground, but who cultivated instead a knowledge and wisdom higher and more celestial than that known in Greece—men whose very language was a sort of shrine and whose souls seemed to be deep reservoirs of divine resignation. He could not contemplate their faces but he saw in them as it were something of the solemn light of temples; and the still atmosphere, of which they almost seemed a part, appeared to possess in itself the gentle melancholy of a faint breeze which bears the soft tolling of a far-off passing-bell.

Ascetics such as these which greeted Apollonius are not unknown to-day even outside of Buddhist lands; for in our own Europe one may see something of the same

peculiar temper in Slavonic recluses. In that land of immensity, of loneliness and silence, where nothing is relative and everything is absolute, there live, dispersed through dim forest and barren steppe, by the great Volga or in the Ural range, men who, like Saint Sergius, have fled the world, who touch no flesh, but exist only on herbs, roots, and nuts, and who live alone, pursuing and penetrating ideas and ever saturating their souls with the immense Thought of God.<sup>1</sup> Or, again, in the Dominion of Canada there are Christian communities so strange that with them to eat meat is a brigandage, to drink milk a theft. A little calf they compare to a little child. "What would you say," they ask naively, "if some one took away your infant's milk?" And in such words as these they pray at seedtime: "O Lord, cause the seed to grow for all creatures; for animal and bird; for the beggar, for he can ask for it; for the robber

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *L'avenir de l'Eglise Russe*, by Joseph Wilbois (Bloud. Paris, 1907), pp. 157, 207, and 259.



if he wishes to steal ; give to him also his portion.”

A like curious delicacy of feeling is seen in the manner in which even the rudest Russian peasant regards ordinary bread, for he would never throw it to his dogs for food, in that he holds all bread to be sanctified, in some sense, from the time the Master took a loaf into His holy hands and blessed it, saying, “This is My body.”<sup>1</sup>

And if in this twentieth century we find among many peoples a sort of exquisite refinement in the choice of physical sustenance, lest that subtle associate of the body, the soul, be hampered, even in a minor degree, through the appetites, in its spiritual ascensions, we in England, who understand so well the pains of the flesh and so little the pangs of the spirit, may at least cease to be astonished at these little austerities exercised by races more psychic and more ideal than our own.

We, with our strong practical nature, too

<sup>1</sup> Vide *L'avenir de l'Eglise Russe*, cited above.

often profess a profound pity, a pity beyond words, for the soul that is lacerated with the sense of the Ideal. Ideals, we seem to believe, are the Tragedies of Man. And the man whose life contains great Ideals is the man whose life contains great Tragedies.

For four months Apollonius remained the guest of these gentle Indian ascetics—these little brothers of St. Francis, if we might so call them.

They initiated him early into the very *arcana* of their mysteries ; and we may take the passage, in which Philostratus records the rite, as a figurative, if not as a true description of part of that sacred ceremony. We find there delineated the solemn anointing of his person with fragrant chrism, *the Fire of Pardon* ; the ritual ablution of his members with lustral waters, *the Well of Discovery* ; the crowning of his head with incense-bearing blossoms ; and the final procession to the illuminated chapel with the whole fraternity singing hymns with all due reverence, and forming within its sacred pre-

cincts the figure of the ancient Greek chorus, with the Superior as coryphæus, the pæans sounding not unlike those stately strophes of Sophocles which were sung at Athens in honour of Æsculapius. During the period of his residence with the monks Apollonius occupied himself with learning all they taught him of their hidden wisdom, testing their philosophical conclusions, and exercising himself daily in their contemplative devotions ; and to such a singular degree was he impressed by the extraordinary height of ecstatic contemplation to which many of them attained that he was compelled to exclaim, "I have seen, I have seen the Brahmins of India dwelling on the earth and yet not on the earth, possessing nothing and yet having all things."

In their spiritual experiences he found the confirmation of his own, and learnt that at least with them "death was thought to be no evil, but only inevitable change ;<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *In the Great God's Hair*, translated from the Hindu by F. W. Bain (Parker, 1904), pp. 44-47 and 89.

that no one is ever really born or ever really dies, for that life is simply a state of being visible and then being invisible ; and that "true life consists in ceasing to have any affection even for life itself (as his famous countryman St. Basil the Great enunciated some centuries later), and in bearing the judgment of death in oneself so that one might not trust in oneself."

Among the many subjects discussed with the sages, Apollonius took especial delight in their views of the nature of the soul, Foreknowledge (*Πρόγνωσις*), and Self-knowledge (the *Γνώθι σεαυτόν*) ; and he learnt more fully from their discourses what were the rules and principles of the understanding, what the functions of the body, how many the faculties of the soul, and how many the mutations which devolve hereafter upon the souls of the departed according to their deserts. On leaving, with deep regret, this home of wisdom, the seers provided him with a guide and camels for his journey, while some

of the more intimate of the brethren courteously accompanied him on part of his way, and only quitted him after many farewells, assuring him that he would be considered as a god not only after his death, but in his lifetime, and expressing much sorrow at his departure, and only returning to their monastery after casting many looks behind.

## VI

### HE VISITS ASIA MINOR AND GREECE

ON his return to Asia Minor he began at once to reform and edify the various religious confraternities and social guilds, visiting temples and oracles and discoursing with the priests on sacrifices and oblations, their proper matter and the hours of libations ; for holding in inestimable regard *Life* in all its multiple manifestations, he would abolish all animal sacrifice, as something abhorrent to the great Demiourgos, of whom all things have *genesis*, and would substitute therefor an offering without blood.

Chief among the great cities and centres of worship which he visited now was Ephesus. There the proud goddess Diana displayed her wealth and magnificence in

flowering groves and parks and in mighty mansions and splendid workshops. Busy streets resounded everywhere with the silver sound of little hammers or with the deeper vibrations of smitten bronze. But all these marks of her patronage she crowned with her immense temple, whose glorious pillars of marble, mellowed by age and atmosphere, gleamed like gold, and whose interior, glistening with superb reliefs of polished silver, shone emblematical of her voluptuous virginity. Here on the arrival of Apollonius the craftsmen held high festival and left their silver metal-work, the commerce of their day, to follow the Teacher, some admiring him for the beauty of his form and the singularly artistic folds of his robes, others for his wisdom and holiness : all for some reason or other.

As his eyes looked upon that fair city—that city which St. Paul had probably just visited—dwelling amid its choice trees and stately monuments, one of those strange moods of prophetic inspiration with which

at times he was moved fell upon him, and he spoke of the near advent of that great human scourge, the plague, which shortly afterwards came upon that splendid city, and left it stricken and desolate, with streets deserted, and villas ruined, and with no lamps burning before its shrines.

Jealous of her sister city, Smyrna sent a special embassy to the sacred man, without giving any reason for the mission (according to his devoted biographer Philostratus), but merely urging his coming. When the Sage inquired of the ambassadors for what purpose they had come to him, they replied, "To see you, O Apollonius, and to be seen by you." No doubt the real reason of the invitation was to attend the great Panionian assembly which at this time was about to meet in honour of Poseidon; and here we may catch something of the virility and morality of the man, for he openly rebuked the assembled councillors for their barbarism in signing their decrees in Roman, instead of in their own Greek, names, thus



forgetting the patriotism which was due to their own country, and also (and surely this was the real reason) forgetting their duty to it ; for those who would avoid paying the heavy taxes, and who would grind the faces of their poor fellow-countrymen without let or hindrance, became in many instances Roman citizens to this end alone, and thus contributed to the further demoralisation of the land.

A similar courage was displayed by him when later he received the embassy of the chiefs of Olympia, who approached him with their homage. In gentle but firm words he chid them on their lack of manly bearing: for he saw nothing of old Sparta in their appearance. Odours steeped their hair, and their faces were beardless and white ; their garments were soft and effeminate, and all their limbs were smooth and glistening. They looked as if they had breathed the air of Sybaris all their lives. His words had the happy effect of reviving their ancient spirit, that of the old Palæstra,

and not long afterwards they announced to him the reformation of their mode of life.

But the festival of the great and tremendous mysteries, the Eleusinian Mysteries, was approaching; and the desire of Apollonius went forth to that devotional rite. Making his way to Athens, he sought initiation into these the most glorious and spiritual of ancient Greek ceremonies. In many places throughout Greece the Eleusinia were celebrated, but only at Eleusis did they possess a supreme significance, a profound mystical instinct, a spiritual anticipation of a future and eternal life.

For nine days he made the appointed ways and all the sacred "stations" of the *via dolorosa* from Athens to Eleusis, visiting the Great Sea, joining in the torch-bearing processions, making pilgrimages to the Holy Well, the Threshing-floor, and the Stone of Sorrow, whereon Demeter, the mother of divine sorrow, sat weeping for our poor humanity and mystically yearning to bestow immortality upon our frail mortality.

He was much disturbed in spirit at the manner in which he saw the Athenians celebrating certain introductory parts of this august rite; for on entering the theatre to hear "the monodies and the melodies and the songs of the chorus and the notes which they sing in both tragedy and comedy," he found to his disappointment that the performance was mostly composed of "dancing, and of dancing to the effeminate flute." The stately lyre, used in the festivals of the Gods, was absent; and the divine epics of Orpheus were debased by voluptuous and shameful representations. No doubt the performance was provided for "the people," but the good man could not refrain himself from rebuking the whole gathering openly. Whether it was due to his forcibly expressed censure or not, it is hard to say, but the hierophant of the Mysteries now refused him initiation. Nevertheless on the tenth morning, when, as the myth goes, Hecate meets Demeter bearing a light in her hands looking for her child

and uttering wild cries to Zeus for its return, all the devout, and we may assume Apollonius to have been of their number, entered the splendid temple of Demeter, traversing its immense white marble pavement and passing through its great propylæa and corridors, until they stood within the sacred shrine itself.

Let us picture the scene, for it is a wonderful and uplifting sight. In the outer precincts stands the great expectant crowd, both Mystæ or purified ones and Epoptæ or initiated. The Night has come. In the glimmer of torch and ceremonial lights, made dimmer by the all-pervading incense-smoke, the faces that are worn with prayer and fasting take to themselves something of strange and unearthly beauty. It is dark and it is silent. For Darkness shuts out the world and Silence shuts in the soul; and in the Darkness is the Light of Heaven and in the Silence is the Voice of God; and so the soul can fully utter itself, feeling instinctively that here vibrates, as through the countless centuries, all the joys and sorrows of aspiring souls.

Yes, there is Night : but all anticipate the Dawn. There is Silence ; but all await the Voice. And in the heart of all is the old story of Demeter, the great Earth-Mother, the Goddess of the corn that is sown in darkness and that rises in the white light of Spring. Death and Life are near. They meet. Fear and Hope, Night and Day, touch. They mingle. It is a solemn hour ; for it is, as it were, the standing on the brink of Death, with the faith that Heaven is there also.

But soon the doors of the great *Cella*, the inmost sanctuary, the holy of holies, are opened for those who are prepared. The Prayer beforehand was only Approach to the Divine : but Communion now will be Contact. That Prayer was but the Desire for the Day ; the passionate Longing for the Face of God. But Communion will be Vision. It will be sunlight breaking upon a thousand hills. So, one by one, they pass in. They are known by their names, for the names of those that have "won their

freedom" are inscribed in a scroll. Still there is Silence like the silence of the grave. It is the *introitus*, the entrance into the Great Mystery, the Mystery of Death. On the lips of each is laid a golden key that they may be sealed for ever, and may for ever guard unuttered what is about to be committed to them then. We may not know all the rest. Yet we may perhaps believe that a white basket, decked with poppies and pomegranates—emblems of Death bearing within itself the countless seeds of Life—is brought around, containing other symbols of Life arising from Death, for the worshippers to touch, and they touch. Then is offered to each a cup of corn-wine to drink, and each drinks, and a marvellous refreshment follows the draught, for it is a sort of divine communion, an imparting to the participant of a new and eternal life; and the wondrous words "Thou art become God from man" are communicated to each enlightened soul. Then they pass out joyfully into the golden

light of the irradiant day, and, as though some cunningly devised door were suddenly withdrawn, all the fresh glory of a new world is laid before their illuminated eyes — fair fields and multicoloured meadows, bright with starlike flowers, all delicately awake and trembling in the calm, sweet sunlight of a new day. They are *The Blessed Fields*, the Fields of Rest and Joy, for those that are worthy. Concurrently, heavenly voices rise in hymns of gladness, holy to hear; and in strophe and antistrophe the grand old Homeric hymn breaks forth in a kind of glorious antiphonal thunder. Through it comes the sound of moving feet, the mystic dance, and the impressive drama of Demeter and Korè is offered to all. The tense Silence and awful Darkness are no more. Here is movement, action, life; and at the close the whole company bursts forth into songs of rejoicings and relief, and hymn on hymn arises, until it would almost seem as if already the frail forms of humanity there present had really been lifted up, and had

entered, by intensity of anticipation, into the New Life, the Life which is eternal, holy, and divine.

While at Athens Apollonius corrected the gross abuse of gladiatorial displays; for brigands and cutpurses and housebreakers and all manner of murderous men were openly bought at high prices in the market, and were then armed and forced to fight in the arena, to please the public passion for blood-letting. Thus, here and there, through Asia Minor, Greece, and the isles of the Archipelago, the Sage travelled, at times performing (as some would believe) strange and miraculous acts, such as evoking the spirit of Achilles at Troy, discerning dæmoniacal possession, revealing a Lamia and foretelling earthquake and troubles, but (be that as it may) at least teaching men better things and uplifting the general level of religious and social life, praising order and decency where conspicuous, and censuring all that would call for rebuke.



## VII

### HE VISITS ROME AND EGYPT

**M**EANTIME it appeared to Apollonius that the Imperial City of Rome was in need of his chastening zeal. Strange spectacles were being witnessed there daily. The Emperor Nero was to be seen frequently driving chariots furiously through the streets, singing on public stages, and even fighting in gladiatorial combats. It seemed in the eyes of Apollonius as if the whole city would be demoralised by such an evil example in high places unless corrected. He decided to visit the town with his reforming and beneficent measures. Frequenting the temples, as was his custom, he quickened at once the public spirit of devotion. To whatsoever shrine he repaired, there also the people flocked ; for so influential was he with the Gods,

in their opinion, that they expected greater favours in those temples where he was than in any others ; and, in consequence, sweet-smelling sacrifices and numberless oblations were offered with an unknown fervour to the Immortals. To the inhabitants he was swiftly and favourably known by reason of a signal manifestation of his healing powers, for he had thrilled the city with a remarkable proof of his peculiar persuasion with the Gods. One evening, on the outskirts of the mighty city, his eyes caught the sight of a large funeral pyre which was being prepared. Around it a vast multitude was gathering in soiled garments and great grief. He approached the place and, as is the nature of the human mind, begged to learn for whom it was. With much lamentation he was informed that it was for a young girl who, on the eve of her wedding day, had died, and that her obsequies would be followed by the flower of Rome's nobility, for her family was of consular rank. Soon a long and melancholy procession drew nigh,

all damp with rain, while the cries of the mourners filling the air intensified the sorrow of the scene. Meeting the sad convoy, the blessed man bid the attendants to set down the bier, and he inquired her name. The procession halted, and all the wailing grew hushed, for it was thought the holy man was about to pronounce, as was sometimes customary, a funeral address. But he, looking upon the maiden, touched her hand, and, his pity revealing itself in his gentle eyes, he called her in a soft and compassionate voice, and wakened the girl from her seeming death. Straightway she sat up and began to speak, and, like Alcestis when recalled to life by Hercules, was able to return to her father's house. Thus it was that he wooed back to life the soul which, to all appearances, seemed extinct and took away death from her who was to be the banquet of the tomb, even as she lay garlanded upon the bier, perfumed and anointed with odorous unguents.

It may be that the reforming zeal of Apol-

lonius found vent in rash acts and utterances or in censuring the Cæsar's mode of life too severely, for it is said that on one occasion he rebuked the buffoonery of the Emperor when he stated that "even the Gods were to be forgiven if they took pleasure in fools"; but, at all events, the Emperor, notwithstanding his democratic pleasures and associations, made a decree in the year 65 A.D. banishing every philosopher from Rome; and Apollonius with all the race of these republican thinkers was compelled to quit the Imperial City.

On leaving Italy, Apollonius went west as far as the Pillars of Hercules, stayed at Sicily, and then revisited Greece, pursuing his object of elevating the spiritual tone of society. At Athens, the repentant hierophant who had previously refused him initiation now received him gladly into the Eleusinian Brotherhood; but there were still habits and customs to be reformed, for we find him denouncing those who "hawked about little images of Dionysus and De-

meter" for sale, describing their trade as a "species of horrid gain" and as a profanation "feeding upon the Gods."

About this time (66-67 A.D.) the Emperor Nero was in Greece celebrating the Olympian Games, and was also continuing there his musical and literary extravaganzas. This superb Festival originally lasted five days. The symbol of the Unity of Greece, it renewed the thought and expressed the fact that, beneath all superficial separation, the great Nation of wide-scattered Greeks was one in blood and speech and art. Here at Olympia, where no woman was permitted to attend, the Treaties of the various States were proclaimed; their Crowns of Friendship conferred upon each other; and their glorious heroes and statesmen publicly honoured; so that the whole of Olympia rang during the Feast with the choice and cultured hymns of Greek poets and the majestic periods of Greek orators. To his accomplishments of artist and athlete Nero added, while there, that of engineer; and he

attempted, but failed, to cut the Isthmus of Corinth. The close proximity of the august Presence was not altogether desirable, and perhaps not even without danger, to Apollonius, to whom "his digging was as unfinished as his singing," and it behoved the Sage to seek "pastures new."

One country besides India had always claimed his admiration and affection—a country associated not only by bonds of religion and commerce with that great land beneath the first risings of the stars, but also with his beloved Hellas; a country whose capital, Alexandria, was then *the* home of learning and philosophy, the university city of the great realm, the centre of the highest culture in the Roman and Greek worlds, and whose far inner reaches and deserts were homes of the purest monastic and ascetic excellences. This splendid country was at least free to him, and on arriving there he was received with the greatest honour. The people loved him, it is said, before they saw him, looking upon him as more than human,

and making way for him in their streets as for one that carries sacred things.

Here as elsewhere he lost no opportunity in endeavouring to abolish blood sacrifices—geese and bulls being the principal offerings in Egypt—but, as often is the way with well-intentioned reformers, he came into conflict with the authorities. The High-priest of Serapis, the Patriarch of Alexandria, marvelled at his temerity in refusing to sacrifice life, and exclaimed, “Who is wise enough to reform the established worship of the Egyptians?”

Here also the abuse of the sport of horse-racing, with its incidental blood-spilling, brought down the displeasure of the Philosopher. “Troy,” he reminded them somewhat sternly, “fell through one horse.”

While carrying on his proposed work among the priests and temples, the future Emperor Vespasian landed at Alexandria. “Where is the Tyanean?” was his first inquiry of the sacred priests, civil magistrates,

and deputies who formed the vast and pompous procession arranged to greet his arrival. "You will find him in the temple," answered Damis the faithful disciple. "Then let us repair thither," replied the Prince, "that I may first offer prayers to the Gods and then converse with this excellent man." On arriving he exclaimed, "*Make me Emperor.*" "It is already done," answered the discreet Apollonius, "for I have so asked it of the Gods, and they have bestowed upon us a most wise, generous, and beneficent Prince."

But in the far-off tracts of Upper Egypt were the great ascetics of the West and South : those who had renounced the world, and had retired into mountains and deserts, where they fasted and meditated in silence and solitude—the naked ones, Gymnosophists, as they were called, in common with all who had, so to say, taken the vow of poverty ; for even Apollonius considered himself as a Gymnosophist. "At the age of fourteen," he said, "I resigned



my patrimony to those that desired such things, and naked I sought the naked."

With a small company of ten souls, he set out for Ethiopia and the Upper Nile, at first by camel and afterwards by barge. As slowly his dahabeah ascended the River of Egypt, moving like a sacred galley conveying pilgrims to a shrine, the occasional traveller or merchant would stay his camel's course and gaze at the sight, perceiving that the boat was full of sages, "conjecturing it so by the singularity of their garb, and by the books that they held in their hands."

After many days' journey they came near the places where the naked ones, γύμνοι, lived. Here, through desert waste and mountainous tract, in countless caves and cells, in solitary shrines and holes, thousands of souls, eager and passionate for *The Blessed Fields*, lived alone in the awful silence of endless outstretching sands and rocks, moved to the hatred of the world and the love of solitude by the same spiritual impulse and the same strange longings for

the Divine Life which have stirred the great religious movements of China, India, and Western Asia, and which have initiated and fertilised the richer mysticism of Christian thought and worship.

In the brooding and almost eternal silence, which, in some sense, seems part of the very atmosphere of the Strong God, those ancient Egyptians must have anticipated, in some degree, the rapturous moments vouchsafed to their more blessed successors, some centuries later, at Oxyrhynchus, Tabenna, Antinoë, and in the Nitrian desert. Through day and night, through heat and cold, we know how these later cœnobites would stand, all tense in prayer, waiting patiently the exquisite hour. Would thoughts of desertion or despair or a sense of weariness or *accidie* arise, the love and expectation of the Consolatory Presence would still surmount all. Over the arid soul the gentle dew would surely sometime fall, if only they were faithful! After the Night of Watching the gentle and

lovely Dawn would surely come ; and then the White Hands of God would extend and bless ; His Breath would come like sweet odours, and His Words like rich oil. His Mien would be gracious ; His Smile would be life itself ; and in His Great Eyes would be all their prayers—the prayers they had forgotten ; the prayers they had thought unheard. Thus these blessed saints, even those quite outworn in body, would commit themselves to “the Wise Physician Who holds in His Hands the pulses of our weakness,” and in Him find a more than abundant compensation for all the pleasures of Alexandria, Rome, or Athens. But great as the renunciation of our holy Fathers was, it seems just to say that the renunciation of these countless Gymnosophists was even greater ; for they, in their venture of faith, surrendered love and wealth and all that makes life desirable, for benefits less positive and blessings less manifest.

In this Place of Meditation no trees could be seen, save some groups of tall

palms which served as a meeting-place for the numberless recluses, whose cells dotted the hills and wide plains for miles around.

It was natural that these silent anchorites would look askance at any stranger arriving in their midst of whom they knew nothing. And for some time they refrained from communicating in any way with Apollonius or his company of disciples. But when many days had passed, and, morning and evening, they had observed him paying his adorations to the Sun, as was his custom, and saw that he also was filled with something of their own spirit, Thesperion, the chief of the community, sent a messenger to the blessed man with an invitation to discourse with him.

At their first meeting, Thesperion, still doubtless not free from suspicion, spoke first, and apparently in a manner which contributed no large measure of honour to his guest. The faithful disciple Damis was greatly overcome and much cast down at the Superior's speech ; but he recovered, it

is recorded, new life as Apollonius replied, and he felt quite restored when he heard all that his master said.

At a subsequent discussion Apollonius expressed his disapproval of the Egyptian practice of representing their Gods as hawks, owls, wolves, dogs, and the like. "Beasts," he stated, "may derive dignity from such representations, but the Gods lose theirs"; and he also expressed the noble thought and sentence that "the man who desires to form in his mind the image of Zeus should behold him with the same enraptured fancy as Phidias did—throned on the Heavens and compassed by the Hours and the Stars." After the Tyanean's powerful speech we read that "Thesperion was like unto one who wished to change the conversation." Whether it was due to these little suspicions and controversies or not, it is difficult to say, but Apollonius concludes that the Sages of India were superior to the Gymnosophists of Egypt both in moral and spiritual excellence.

As he was so far up the River Nile,

Apollonius conceived the desire of endeavouring to track it to its source ; and he visited the Cataracts, which, he states, burst with such intense violence over the great rocks which formed the falls that his little party could not contemplate the sight without great pain to their hearing : their heads grew dizzy with the deafening thunder of the waters, until, stunned, they seemed as though they were delirious and heard the drums of all the desert sounding in their ears.

Failing in the attempt to find the risings of the great river, the explorers returned to Alexandria in time to learn of the capture and utter destruction of Jerusalem by Titus in 70 A.D., and Apollonius marked the event by a letter of congratulation to the Roman general complimenting him upon his moderation !

## VIII

### HIS FURTHER TRAVELS AND RETURN TO ROME FOR TRIAL

FOR some score of years after this event Apollonius travelled and taught in Phœnicia, Ionia, and Greece, but his biographer leaves something of a *lacuna* in this part of the *Life*; but it would seem that he had considerable intercourse with Titus and also with Vespasian and Nerva prior to their elevation to the purple. His friendship with the last-named and his unceasing zeal for reform gave opportunity to those who disliked his proposed changes to injure him in the eyes of the Emperor Domitian. So numerous and so insistent did accusations and informations lie against him, that at length, to clear himself, he determined to go to Rome and meet his accusers face to face.

The charges against this restless spirit were of different kinds and not few in number. They included his style of dress and mode of living; his knowledge of futurity and the adoration offered to him; the homage which he paid to Nerva; for statements which were believed to have been uttered against the Emperor Domitian, and for conspiring to obtain the Empire. The real charge lay in the homage which it was alleged he paid to Nerva as a candidate for the purple.

Meanwhile he was arrested, cast into a common gaol, and kept under strict guard. Yet he maintained that dignity and fortitude which was essentially his own, and at times he harangued his fellow-prisoners with words of encouragement, and found no little comfort both for himself and for them in such thoughts as these: "Whilst we live we are all prisoners, for the soul is bound to the body and suffers much. The men who first built houses built for themselves but a second prison. Cities also are but common



prisons ; and the Earth itself is bound by the Ocean as by a chain." Then apostrophising the poets he exclaimed, "Draw nigh, ye poets, and sing to these afflicted creatures, recounting how even Saturn of old was fettered by Vulcan in Heaven itself" ; and with such-like words he evoked the stoical spirit in the most degraded natures. After some time he was led forth to an audience of the Emperor. Four guards attended him, but they preserved a greater distance from his person than was their custom when guarding common prisoners. The Augustus, crowned with a garland of green boughs, received him in the Hall of Adonis, which was at the time decorated in honour of the feast of Adonis with shells and flowers similar to what were borne by the Assyrians in their sacred festivals. After discussing the charges privately with him, Domitian, more suspicious than ever, commanded that he should be shorn and placed in a more loathsome prison than the former one, loaded with heavy chains, and set

amongst the vilest felons. The unhappy Damis now lost all heart and weeping exclaimed bitterly, "O Master, what will become of us? Who will defend you now?" "Time," answered the dauntless Tyanean, "and the spirit of the Gods and the love of Philosophy." This bold hope proved true; and at the trial which followed, Apollonius, lifting up his eyes to Zeus, spoke so ably that "a shout of applause arose louder than what was suitable to the dignity and gravity of an Imperial tribunal," and he was acquitted by the Emperor himself.

Some time after thus in a real sense "winning his freedom" the philosopher returned to Greece, and was received everywhere with enthusiasm and respect; and this—the final period of his long life—may be termed the period of his triumph. Olympia itself was stirred at his presence, and the people flocked to see him with more eagerness than to witness the Olympic Games. Crowds of disciples attached themselves to his person, and the flower of the

land followed him, content to learn of his wisdom. The name *Apollonian* was given to these followers; and near the Springs of Hercyne, in the cave of Trophonius in Bœotia, he wrote down for their use the precepts of his great predecessor Pythagoras; and the book was afterwards preserved by the Emperor Hadrian in his palace at Antium. For two years he teaches Greece, and then visits Ionia, Smyrna, and Ephesus for the last time. At Ephesus he was moved by that strange telepathic sympathy which influenced him at times so curiously, and he announced to the astonishment of the Ephesians the assassination of Domitian at the very time of the tragedy.

The new Emperor, Nerva, sent for the aged philosopher, now heavy with his hundred years, and invited him to come to Rome and act as his counsellor; but a summons more august than that of the great Cæsar of the Roman Empire came to him. It was the summons of Death—the call to “the supreme Initiation into the Great Mys-

teries," as Plutarch calls it in his fragment *On the Soul*; and in his own characteristic way he met the dread command. Sending away his faithful Damis on a mission, real or fictitious, to the new Emperor, Nerva, he died alone and followed out his own maxim—for his tomb, it is said, could nowhere be found—"Conceal your life, and if you cannot do that conceal your death."

## IX

### CONCLUSION

VIEWING the philosophy or "religion" of this wonderful man, we see that it was of a piece with all speculative systems of thought. The mystery of Death was the basis of it; and the mystery of Death is the background of all philosophy. The philosopher deludes himself when he says he is explaining Life. He is not. He is really endeavouring to understand Death. He is trying to interpret the dark shadow that surely falls at even, or the chilly wind that suddenly unsummers June, or the hidden hand that silently extinguishes a star; that terrible finger which, without distinction, infects all things, beautiful or base, with its leprous touch—for the evil thing must also die. It is this eternal disintegrating force,

this perpetual separating power, interpenetrating all life, inhabiting all thought and form, which has unbalanced heathen philosophy and left out the part that Love should support.

And the philosophy of Apollonius stood as no exception to the rule. His was not a philosophy for women. It was never meant for that. It was only a philosophy for men. It compassed none of those more tender notes, those sad wordless songs or untold compassions which, like inexpressible pities, find refuge only in a woman's heart. And he himself deliberately refrained from entering that Sanctuary : yea, into her darkness or her silence he did not even stoop. He could sow no seeds of love in her soul. He could present to her no *Mater Misericordie*, no Lady of Sorrows, no Sister of surpassing tenderness to whom her sad and trembling voice could rise, as from some sacred grove, and tell of her grief for children or her loss of love. And so although he was gifted with the strange

faculty of discerning men's minds, he yet lacked that more attractive sympathy, that singular gift of unlocking the troubled hearts of women, which was so evident in the being of St. Philip Neri or in that of the Blessed John Vianney, whose peculiar tendernesses drew all France to his confessional for the exceeding sweetness of his soul.

Thus he never really fathomed, in all its mysterious depths and endless recesses, the great well-spring of human affection. He valued not that which, with us, is longed for by so many and realised by so few. Only the great contending male, solitary in his aspirations, intense and awful in his quest for God, was by him accounted worthy to tell to Heaven the weightier sorrows of his heart. Nature and the Gods were nearer to him than woman ; for they knew the secret which she did not know and which he alone longed to know. He had need of them. They partook of something over and beyond Death, something which he desired above all

things—Life. Whereas she was but of to-day and for to-day. Thus, like all Greeks, he refused to value Love, and laid no serious worth upon what men now prize as the greatest of all virtues. He valued Life and Life only.

Yet perhaps there is a deeper reason, a more elemental cause, why Love finds no part in Greek philosophy; and which we ourselves may find in the Hour of Darkness and in the Night of Fear. For in the instance of a great bereavement we might well conceive of one thinking, in the midnight of his sorrow, as he would recall the delectable perfections of some departed friend, that there is nothing beautiful enough to live. And truly thinking thus, from that hour he could not help but cease to love, repeating again and again, "Surely there is nothing beautiful enough to live, since the great Lord of Life and Love has slain my exceedingly beloved friend, as though He deemed him unworthy of the gift of life"; and thus reasoning, he would



continue, "Who henceforth can be dear to me, for it is vain to vesture a mortal creature with immortal love? The most noble graces and the most perfect gifts can please me no more, for now I know that the fairest women and the most honourable men must also some day die." Thus might one in old times have spoken to himself in the haughtiness of his soul, and would have refused to offer another triumph to the triumphs of Death by refusing to love. But after all—in the Philosophic Absolute—who can climb the heights of the magnificent Mountain Truth which lifts its glorious head beyond the outmost stars and pillars God Himself? No man, nor any tribe, nor even the human Race, nor yet the whole Creation of Intelligences higher than Man. Yet if we take away Love from Life we take away the Wings that would lift us when we cannot climb.

Viewing the fall of Apollonius's life we find it does not differ from its height in respect of spiritual Love. The Peace of Vast

Plains and the Silence of Solitary Mountains were ever in his heart, but he never heard the singing of the Seraphim—the Seraphim who, most aflame with Love, are nearest God. He was never lifted up, during all his life, into the burning plane of Adoration and Love which Christians only know. And in the extreme hour he turned from the affections and comfort of his fellow-man. He looked for Peace and not for Love. Peace is indeed a blessed thing, longed for and prayed for so earnestly and so ceaselessly by weary humanity ; and it has been so much prized, through all the Christian ages, that a special significance has been ascribed to it in the Eastern Church, and a special Litany, called the Litany of Peace, reserved for use by Her in all Her sacred Offices. And we may say, perhaps not unwisely, that Death came to Apollonius, in the words of such another of Her Litanies, as “an Angel of Peace, a faithful Guide, a Guardian of his soul and body.”

And yet again we find that beyond the

Grave he *seeks* Peace. He leaves none behind him. And this is quite sufficient in our opinion to justify, if on no other grounds, the entire dismissal of the foolish invention of controversialists that the life and death of Apollonius was drawn up by his biographer as a counterwork to the life and death of the Son of God. For at the supreme epoch of "inevitable change" his peace of mind was not made sorrowful with the sense of a great betrayal. He has no fears of an inevitable passion. He arranges no sad *Cæna*, utters no final farewell, prophetic with the anguish of his death. He bequeaths no cheering promise of a perpetual Presence, no gift of Peace, to his friends. He grants no succouring or uplifting prerogatives. He gives no *Donatio mortis causa*, so to say, to his disciples; but to the dulcet and inviting voices of virgins issuing, as his followers would believe, from the Singing Gates of Heaven, he departs triumphantly and as one called to the throne of the Gods. Thither he ascends, as a

God to the Gods. His is no death, for he does not die. It is a sacred transformation, an assumption, an apotheosis. To the mind of the ancient it is magnificent, but to us it lacks the sweet, sad note of humanity; for it lacks that one inevitable, one tremendous crisis of our being, that one awful and consummate moment, when the stricken soul, so long pursued, is at length overtaken by the transcendent Love of God.



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